

MissouriNet.com

September 29, 2009

Section: Missouri News

State health officials introduce improved plan for stroke and heart attack treatment

By: Steve Walsh

The State Department of Health and Senior Services is hosting a half dozen public meetings, throughout the state, to introduce an improved statewide system of care for victims of stroke and heart attack. It's being billed as a cutting-edge plan for emergency treatment, with Health Department officials leading discussions of proposed rules to guide the emergency care system for patients who suffer stroke or a common form of heart attack known as ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction, or STEMI.

Doctor Samar Muzaffar, the State EMS Medical Director with the Department, says it is known that patients with the best survival rates are those who are given appropriate treatment in relatively short time. It's called time critical diagnosis.

"The goal of the system is to identify that right patient and get them to the right place in the right amount of time so they can get the right care," said Muzaffar in an interview with the MissouriNet.

Many times a person suffering a stroke or heart attack will drive to or will be driven to a hospital for treatment, but it is important to get the patient to the right place where the best treatment can be provided.

"The key is really calling 911, and that's what we'd like to stress with the system," said Muzaffar.

And, once 911 is called and the patient is being treated, the best course of action can be determined.

"911 and the EMS out-of-hospital hospital folks have that knowledge in terms of, you know, what needs to be done next," said Muzaffar. "While they're transporting a patient they can be doing things during that time, as well, and there's always communication happening between the out-of-hospital and the hospital folks to really pinpoint what needs to be done with that patient."

Educating heart disease and stroke patients to know what to in the event of an emergency is crucial to dealing with Missouri's number 1 and number 3 causes of death, respectively.